

**FAQ about the Commission's Investigation into U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) supported research on sexually transmitted diseases in Guatemala from 1946-1948 involving the intentional infection of vulnerable human populations**

**Q. How far along is the investigation?**

A. On November 24, 2010, President Obama directed his Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues (PCSBI), beginning in January, to “oversee a thorough fact-finding investigation into the specifics” of the USPHS supported research. A copy of the President’s charge to the Commission can be seen here: <http://www.bioethics.gov/documents/Human-Subjects-Protection-Letter-from-President-Obama-11.24.10.pdf>

The Commission’s fact-finding review is underway. Executive Director, Valerie Bonham, a senior attorney who worked previously with President Clinton's Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments, the closest analog in U.S. history to the fact-finding being undertaken now, oversees a 15 person investigation team. Several senior historians and medical ethicists are acting as advisors in this effort.

Records are being examined in archives across the United States, including the National Archive and Records Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention archives at Morrow, Georgia, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), successor organization to the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Virginia, the National Library of Medicine, and the National Academies. Records are being sought also from relevant agencies, including the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and State. An independent physician will review individual medical records. Records from the Government of Guatemala may also be requested in the near future.

**Q. What else is being done?**

A. President Obama also asked the Bioethics Commission to conduct a review of the adequacy of human subjects protection across the international field of research. Specifically, he asked PCSBI to convene an international panel to review current U.S. Government regulations and international standards and consider if they adequately guard the health and well-being of participants in scientific studies supported by the U.S. Government.

The International Research Panel was announced on March 1 and it will report to the Commission. It includes 14 leaders from the bioethics and medical/science communities. A majority of members come from outside the U.S., including one person from Guatemala. Amy Gutmann, Ph.D., Chair of PCSBI, will lead the International Research Panel. The Panel will meet at least 2-3 times in the next five months and at least once overseas. A copy of the press release announcing the Panel can be seen here: <http://www.bioethics.gov/news/2011/03/presidents-bioethics-commission-names-international-research-panel.html>

**Q. Who is PCSBI?**

A. The Commission is an advisory panel of the nation’s leaders in medicine, science, ethics, religion, law and engineering. PCSBI advises the President on bioethical issues arising from advances in biomedicine and related areas of science and technology. The Commission seeks to identify and promote policies and practices that ensure scientific research, health care delivery, and technological innovation are conducted in a socially and ethically responsible manner.

